

## **Chapter 1.18**

### **ADMINISTRATIVE CITATIONS**

(3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06, 3828-5/09)

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#### **1.18.010 Applicability.**

- (a) This chapter makes any violation of the provisions of this code subject to civil fine. (3397-7/98)
- (b) This chapter establishes the administrative procedures for the imposition, enforcement, collection, and administrative review of civil fines pursuant to Government Code section 53069.4 and the City's plenary police power under its charter. (3397-7/98)
- (c) The issuance of an administrative citation under this chapter is solely at the City's discretion and is one option the City has to address violations of this code. By adopting this chapter, the City does not intend to limit its discretion to utilize any other remedy, civil or criminal, for such violations that the City may select in a particular case. (3397-7/98)
- (d) The purpose of issuing administrative citations pursuant to this chapter is to encourage voluntary and complete compliance with the provisions of this code for the protection and benefit of the entire community. (3397-7/98)
- (e) Notwithstanding any lease, license or any other instrument or agreement, the owner of any real property has the right to enter upon his or her own property to the extent reasonably necessary to abate any nuisance or correct any violation of this code existing thereon. The provisions of this subsection shall be an implied term of any instrument affecting the right to possession of real property located in the City of Huntington Beach. (3397-7/98)
- (f) Because of the serious blighting conditions that can result affecting the residents' health and safety, this chapter is intended to impose strict civil liability upon the owners and lessees of real property for all building, housing, fire and health code and zoning violations that occur upon the subject premises. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.020 Definitions.**

The following definitions apply to the use of these terms for the purposes of this chapter:

- (a) Building Violation - Any violation of this code pertaining to building, plumbing, electrical, or other similar structural or zoning regulations set forth in this code that does not create an immediate danger to health or safety. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (b) Citation - An administrative citation issued pursuant to this chapter. Citation includes a Notice of Noncorrection unless the context clearly shows otherwise. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (c) Citee - Person given an administrative citation charging him or her as a responsible person for a code violation. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (d) City Attorney – The City Attorney or his/her designee. (3630-02/04)
- (e) City Treasurer – The City Treasurer or his/her designee. (3630-02/04)
- (f) Enforcement officer - Any City employee or agent of the City designated by the Director of any City department which has the authority and responsibility to enforce provisions of this code. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (g) Finance Director – Shall mean the Director of the City’s Finance Department or his/her designee. (3751-11/06)
- (h) Hearing Officer - The person appointed by the City Administrator to serve as the Hearing Officer for administrative hearings. Prior to conducting hearings the Hearing Officer must first be certified by the City Attorney as qualified to provide a fair and impartial hearing based on appropriate education, training and experience. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
- (i) Issued - Giving a citation to the citee and issuance occurs on the date when a citation is personally served on the citee, the date it is mailed to the citee, or the date it is posted on real property where a property related violation occurs. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
- (j) Issuing department - The City department that has the authority and responsibility for enforcing the code section(s) designated on a citation as having been violated. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
- (k) Notice of Noncorrection - A reissuance of an original citation for a building violation which notes a violation(s) on the original citation has not been corrected within the applicable correction period. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
- (l) Responsible person - A responsible person is any of the following: (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
  - (1) A person who causes a code violation to occur. (3397-7/98)
  - (2) A person who maintains or allows a code violation to continue, by his or her action or failure to act. (3397-7/98)
  - (3) A person whose agent, employee, or independent contractor causes a code violation by its action or failure to act. (3397-7/98)
  - (4) A person who is the owner of, and a person who is a lessee or sublessee with the current right of possession of, real property where a property related code violation occurs. (3397-7/98)
  - (5) A person who is the on-site manager of a business who normally works daily at the site when the business is open and is responsible for the activities at such premises. (3397-7/98)

For purposes of this subdivision "person" includes a natural person or legal entity, and the owners, majority stockholders, corporate officers, trustees, and general partners of a legal entity. (3397-7/98)

There shall be a legal rebuttable presumption that the record owner of a parcel according to the County's latest equalized property tax assessment rolls and a lessee or sublessee of a parcel has notice of any code violation existing on the premises. (3397-7/98)

For the purposes of this chapter, there may be more than one responsible person for a code violation, and a minor at least 14 years of age may be a responsible person subject to the provisions of this chapter. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.030 Administrative Citation for Non-building Violation.**

- (a) Any Enforcement Officer upon determining that a provision of this code, which he or she is charged to enforce, has been violated has the authority to issue an administrative citation to any responsible person or persons. An Enforcement Officer may issue a citation for a violation the officer did not see occur if the officer has determined through investigation that the responsible person did commit the violation. A responsible person to whom a citation is issued shall be liable for and shall pay to the City Treasurer the fine or fines described in the citation when due pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. (3397-7/98, 3751-11/06)
- (b) Each day a violation of this code exists shall be a separate violation and be subject to a separate fine. A citation may charge a violation for one or more days on which a violation exists, and for violation of one or more code sections. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (c) The City may take into consideration the fact that a person has been issued citations when the City is determining whether to grant, suspend, revoke, or deny any permit, license, or any type of land use approval for the person and such citations are evidence that the person has committed acts that are not compatible with the health, safety and general welfare of other persons and businesses in the vicinity. (3397-7/98, 3630-2/04)

#### **1.18.040 Administrative Citation for Building Violation.**

- (a) When a citation is issued for a building violation, a thirty (30) day correction period shall be provided for the correction of the violation and the citee shall correct the violation within that period. Notwithstanding section 1.18.030, no responsible person for a building violation shall be liable for a civil fine unless the violation continues after the 30 days allowed for its correction (plus any extension) and he or she is issued a Notice of Noncorrection. (3397-7/98)
- (b) The citee of a building violation may request an extension of the correction period provided that a request is filed with the Director of the Issuing Department before the 30-day period ends. The Director may in his or her discretion grant a reasonable extension of the period of time to correct the violation if the citee has supplied substantial evidence showing that the correction cannot reasonably be made within the 30-day period. The Director's decision shall be in writing and is final. The filing for such an extension does not, unless granted, extend the 30-day correction period or any other time periods set by this chapter. (3397-7/98)
- (c) If a building violation has not been corrected by the end of the correction period, the Enforcement Officer has authority to issue to the responsible person a Notice of Noncorrection. The citee to whom the Notice of Noncorrection is issued shall be liable for and shall pay to the City the fine or fines described in the Notice of Noncorrection which fine shall be due on the date the Notice of Noncorrection is issued. Additional citations may be issued and fines imposed for every day the violation continues uncorrected from the date the Notice of Noncorrection is issued and the citee shall be liable for and shall pay to the City Treasurer any additional fine which shall be due on the date any new citation is issued. (3397-7/98, 3751-11/06)

- (1) The Director of the Department that issued the citation may cancel a citation within thirty (30) days of the citation date upon a showing of special circumstances if an administrative hearing has not been requested under Section 1.18.100. (3828-5/09)
- (d) If upon reinspection the Enforcement Officer determines the violation has been corrected, he or she will issue a Notice of Decision to the citee indicating correction has been made. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.050 Citation Contents.**

- (a) Each administrative citation shall contain the following information: (3397-7/98)
  - (1) Name of the responsible person for the violation of this code. (3397-7/98)
  - (2) Date on which an inspection established the code violation. (3397-7/98)
  - (3) Issuing department for the code section(s) violated. (3397-7/98)
  - (4) The code section violated. (3397-7/98)
  - (5) Address where the code violation occurred. (3397-7/98)
  - (6) Description of the violation established by inspection. (3397-7/98)
  - (7) Amount of the fine for the violation and procedure to pay the fine and avoid a late payment penalty. (3397-7/98)
  - (8) Designation of a building violation (if applicable), date the 30-day correction period expires, and how to request an extension of that period, and designation of a Notice of Noncorrection for a building violation that has not been corrected. (3397-7/98)
  - (9) Designation of any prior citations, issued for the same code violations, if known. (3397-7/98)
  - (10) Description of the procedure for requesting a Waiver of Fine Deposit and/or an Administrative Hearing to contest a citation. (3397-7/98)
  - (11) A notice that the code violation is a nuisance and that collection of unpaid fines and/or nuisance abatement costs can be enforced as an assessment or lien against the property where a property related code violation occurs and that unpaid assessments can result in the property being sold after three years by the County Assessor as set forth in section 1.18.150 of this code. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
  - (12) Signature of the Enforcement Officer issuing the citation. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
  - (13) Date the citation is issued. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
  - (14) Any other information deemed necessary by the City Attorney, City Treasurer or Finance Director for enforcement or collection purposes. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)

#### **1.18.060 Service of Citation.** A citation may be served as follows:

- (a) An Enforcement Officer may personally serve the citation on the citee. The citee is required to sign a copy of the citation showing his or her receipt of the citation. (3397-7/98)
- (b) An Enforcement Officer may mail the citation by certified mail. The citation shall be mailed to the citee's address shown on the county's last equalized property tax assessment rolls for a property related violation, or to any address known for the citee for all other violations. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)

- (c) An Enforcement Officer may post the property in a conspicuous place with a copy of the citation when the citee resides at an unknown address other than where the violation occurs. A copy of the citation shall also be mailed via certified mail to the citee at the property address. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)

#### **1.18.070 Amount of Civil Fines.**

- (a) The amount of the fines for violating particular provisions of this code shall be set in a schedule of fines adopted by resolution by the City Council. The schedule may include escalating fine amounts for repeat code violations occurring within specified periods of time. (3397-7/98)
- (b) The schedule of fines may also specify the amount of interest, late payment penalty, and processing fee owed for any fine not paid when due. A late payment penalty and interest shall be owed for fines not paid within 30 days of the date of issuance of the citation. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (c) Fines are due on the day the citation is issued, except (i) fines for building violations shall be due on the day the Notice of Noncorrection is issued and (ii) when a fine deposit has been waived pursuant to section 1.18.110 and the Hearing Officer upholds the citation, the fine shall be due on the date the decision is made and personally served on the citee or the date the decision is mailed to the citee. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.080 Payment of Civil Fines.**

- (a) Fines shall be paid to and received by the City Treasurer within 30 days of the date of issuance of the citation. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (b) Payment of a fine shall not excuse the citee from correcting the code violation. The issuance of a citation and/or payment of a fine does not bar the City from taking any other enforcement action regarding a code violation that is not corrected, including issuing additional administrative citations and/or criminal complaints. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.090 Preliminary Review.**

- (a) A person issued an administrative citation may request a Preliminary Review, if the request is made within 14 days of the date the citation is issued. A Notice of Noncorrection of a building violation shall not be subject to a request for Preliminary Review. (3397-7/98)
- (b) To obtain a review, the citee shall go to the City government building where the Issuing Department is located. The citee must present a copy of the citation and a completed and signed request form stating the reasons why there was no violation or why he or she is not a responsible person for the violation. All requests shall be date stamped upon receipt. (3397-7/98)
- (c) The Preliminary Review shall be conducted by a City employee designated by the Director of the Issuing Department. The reviewer shall not be the Enforcement Officer who issued the citation. The purpose of the review is to uncover and cancel any mistakenly issued citations due to errors that are easily verifiable, and not to resolve factual disputes concerning the violation that is the subject of the citation. (3397-7/98)
- (d) The Preliminary Review will be decided at the time the request is filed if reasonably practical as determined by the reviewer. It shall consist of a review of the citation and the written request form and any other evidence submitted at the time of the request by the citee and, at the discretion of the reviewer, any other related information. Where the review is not

completed within 5 working days of receipt of the request, the request shall be deemed denied. (3397-7/98)

- (e) The citee shall be notified of the results of the review by being given a Notice of Decision form stating the review decision. The citee may also be given additional notice by telephone or facsimile when practicable. (3397-7/98)
- (f) A request for Preliminary Review does not extend any time periods for compliance, including the fine due date, the time any correction period ends, and the time to request an Administrative Hearing. (3397-7/98)
- (g) If the reviewer concludes that no code violation occurred or that the citee was not responsible for the violation, the citation shall be canceled. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.100 Request for Administrative Hearing.**

- (a) Any person receiving an administrative citation may contest it by filing a request for an Administrative Hearing, except that a hearing for a building violation may not be requested unless and until a Notice of Noncorrection is issued. To obtain a hearing, the citee shall file a signed written request form contained on the reverse side of the citation and indicate the grounds for contesting the citation and fine. A citee may contest the citation by denying that a violation occurred, by denying that it was not corrected within the correction period, if applicable, or by denying that the citee is a responsible person for the violation. (3397-7/98)
- (b) To be effective and complete, the request must be received by the City Attorney within 30 days of the date the citation was issued, and be accompanied by evidence of payment of the full amount of the fine. Where a request and fine deposit are mailed by the citee, the request and fine deposit shall be deemed filed on the date received by the City Treasurer. All requests shall be date stamped upon receipt. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (c) The person requesting the Administrative Hearing may file a written declaration with the City Attorney before the hearing or personally attend the hearing on the date, time and place specified by the City Attorney. A failure to file a written declaration before the hearing or personally attend the hearing will be considered a non-appearance. Non-appearance by the citee shall constitute an abandonment of the request, unless the hearing was continued pursuant to section 1.18.120(f). (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)

#### **1.18.110 Waiver of Fine Deposit.**

- (a) A person who files a request for an Administrative Hearing may also request at the same time a hardship waiver of the fine deposit. To seek such a waiver and obtain a separate hearing on the request, the citee must check the box indicating this request on the form contained on the reverse side of the citation and attach a statement of the grounds for the request. To be effective, this form requesting the waiver and the Administrative Hearing must be received by the City Attorney within 30 days of the date the citation is issued. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (b) The person requesting the waiver bears the burden of establishing by substantial evidence that he or she does not have the financial ability to make the deposit of the fine. The citee shall appear at the hearing as set by the City Attorney's office or file a written declaration with the City Attorney prior to the hearing. A failure to file a written declaration before the hearing or personally attend the hearing will be considered a non-appearance. Non-appearance shall constitute an abandonment of both the requests unless the hearing was continued pursuant to section 1.18.120(f). (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (c) The waiver request will be decided by the Hearing Officer at a separate hearing before the Administrative Hearing on the contest of the citation. At the conclusion of the hearing on the waiver request, the Hearing Officer shall issue a decision that the fine deposit is or is not

waived. A copy of the Notice of Decision shall be delivered to the citee at the end of the hearing on the waiver request. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)

- (d) If the waiver is denied, the citee shall pay the fine amount within fourteen days to the City Treasurer. Failure to make the deposit by the time required shall be deemed an abandonment of the contest. Upon receipt of the fine amount, the administrative hearing to contest the citation shall be set pursuant to Huntington Beach Municipal Code §1.18.120. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
- (e) The filing of a request for hardship waiver of the fine deposit does not extend any time periods set forth in this chapter, except the time when the fine deposit must be made. The Hearing Officer's decision on the waiver request is final and not subject to an appeal pursuant to section 1.18.140. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)

### **1.18.120 Hearing Procedures.**

- (a) The hearing shall be conducted by a Hearing Officer on the date, time and place specified by the City Attorney. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (b) The City Attorney shall ensure that the pertinent citation records are delivered to the Hearing Officer for a citation set for a hearing, including information showing all fine deposits and waivers granted. The City Attorney shall also make available to the citee before the hearing a copy of any additional reports concerning the citation that are provided to the Hearing Officer. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (c) The citee shall be given the opportunity to testify and to present evidence relevant to the code violation specified in the citation. A parent or legal guardian of a citee who is a minor, under 18 years of age, shall accompany the citee. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (d) The citation and any other reports prepared by the Enforcement Officer, or at his or her request, concerning the code violation or attempted correction of the code violation that are provided to the Hearing Officer shall be accepted by the Hearing Officer as prima facie evidence of the code violation and the facts stated in such documents. (3397-7/98)
- (e) Neither the Enforcement Officer nor any other representative of the City shall be required to attend the hearing, nor shall the Hearing Officer require that there be submitted any evidence, other than the citation, that may exist among the public records of the City on the violation. However, any such appearance and/or submission may be made at the discretion of the Enforcement Officer or any City employee or agent. (3397-7/98)
- (f) The Hearing Officer may continue a hearing if a request is made showing good cause by the citee or a representative of the City. All continuance requests shall either: (i) be made in person at the hearing by the citee or his or her representative if the citee is physically unable to attend, or (ii) be made by a written request received by the City Attorney at least 24 hours before the hearing date. If the continuance is granted, a new hearing date shall be set within 45 days. If the continuance is denied, the hearing shall proceed then and there as scheduled, and if the citee is not present the request(s) shall be deemed abandoned in accordance with subsection H below. The Hearing Officer's decision is final and he or she shall either personally give the Notice of Decision to the citee or the representative if present at the end of the hearing or request that the notice be mailed by the City Attorney. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (g) The hearing shall be conducted informally and the legal rules of evidence need not be followed. The Hearing Officer does not have the authority to issue a subpoena. (3397-7/98)
- (h) The failure of the citee to appear at the hearing, unless the hearing was continued per subsection (f) above, shall constitute an abandonment of the request for waiver of the fine deposit and/or the contest, and a failure to exhaust administrative remedies concerning the

violation set forth in the citation. The fine deposit shall be credited by the City upon the fine due for the violation. The failure to appear by the citee shall be noted on the Notice of Decision by the Hearing Officer which will be mailed to the citee by the City Attorney.

(3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)

#### **1.18.130 Administrative Hearing Decision.**

- (a) After considering all the evidence and testimony submitted at the administrative hearing, the Hearing Officer shall issue a written decision to uphold or cancel the citation. The Hearing Officer has no discretion or authority to reduce or modify the amount of any fine. The decision will be made on a Notice of Decision form and will state the reasons and evidence considered for the decision. The decision of the Hearing Officer shall be made at the conclusion of the hearing and shall be final. The Notice of Decision for the Administrative Hearing shall be personally delivered to the citee at the conclusion of the hearing. (3397-7/98)
- (b) If the decision is to uphold the citation, the City shall keep the fine deposited as payment upon the fine due. If the decision is to cancel the citation, the Finance Director shall refund the fine deposit to the citee within 30 days of the filing of the decision. If the citation is upheld and the fine deposit has been waived, the fine shall be due to the City Treasurer on the date the decision is given to the citee at the end of the hearing by the Hearing Officer. (3397-7/98, 3751-11/06)
- (c) The Hearing Officer's continued employment, performance evaluation, compensation, and benefits shall not directly or indirectly be linked to the amount of citations upheld or canceled by the officer. (3397-7/98)

#### **1.18.140 Right to Judicial Review.**

- (a) The citee may seek judicial review of the Administrative Hearing decision by filing an appeal with the West Justice Center of the Superior Court within 20 calendar days after the citee receives a copy of the Notice of Decision at the conclusion of the hearing in accordance with the provisions of California Government Code section 53069.4. The appeal filed with the court must also contain a proof of service showing a copy of the appeal was served upon "City of Huntington Beach (Attention: City Attorney)." The citee must pay to the West Justice Center a \$25 filing fee when the appeal is filed. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04)
- (b) No appeal is permitted from a decision on a request for preliminary review, or an extension of the 30-day correction period for building violations, or a request for waiver of the fine deposit, or where the citee is deemed to have abandoned the contest of the citation by an unexcused nonappearance at the hearing or failure to deposit the fine. (3397-7/98)
- (c) The City Attorney, shall forward to the Court within 15 days of its request, the pertinent citation documents for any case appealed to that court. If the Court cancels any citation, the City Treasurer will refund any fine deposit made and the \$25 appeal filing fee. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)

#### **1.18.150 Collection of Unpaid Fines.**

- (a) The City Treasurer at his/her discretion may pursue any and all legal and equitable remedies for the collection of unpaid fines, interest and penalties. (3751-11/06)
  - (1) Pursuit of one remedy does not preclude the pursuit of any other remedies until the total fines, interest and penalties owed by a person under this chapter have been collected.
  - (2) The City may refuse to issue, extend, or renew to any person, who has unpaid delinquent fines, interest, penalties, liens or assessments, any City permit, license, or



other City services or approval pertaining to the property or person that is the subject of the fine and citation. (3751-11/06)

- (3) Any permit, license, or any type of land use approval issued by the City to a person who has unpaid fines, interest and penalties totaling \$1,000 or more that remain delinquent for 30 days or longer shall automatically be suspended. The suspension becomes effective 10 days after the day notice of the suspension is sent via certified, U.S. mail, postage prepaid, addressed to the person, and continues until the delinquency is paid in full. The person may request a review hearing pursuant to the procedures in section 1.18.090 on the issue of delinquency, if the request is filed before the 10 day period ends. Continuing to operate under a suspended permit, license or approval shall be grounds for the revocation of the permit, license or approval.  
(3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3751-11/06)
  - (4) The City Attorney, at his or her discretion, may also issue a criminal complaint to any citee for a code violation when the applicable fine, interest or penalty has not been paid.
  - (b) Any violation of this code shall constitute a nuisance. To compel code compliance, the City may seek to abate the nuisance and collect the costs incurred by means of a nuisance abatement lien and/or special assessment against the property where a property related violation occurred in accordance with the procedures in Government Code sections 38773.1 and 38773.5. Any unpaid delinquent civil fines, interest and penalties may be recovered as such a lien or special assessment against the property of the responsible person who is the owner of the property where the violation occurred.
  - (c) To pursue an abatement of a code violation as a nuisance and recover any delinquent civil fines, interest and penalties as a lien or special assessment, the following conditions must be met:
    - (1) The City Treasurer in conjunction with the City Attorney must certify the amounts of the liens and special assessments sought to be collected from each property owner; and  
(3751-11/06, 3828-5/09)
    - (2) The total amount of the delinquent fine, interest and penalty against the property owner must be \$250 or more and be delinquent for 60 days or more.
  - (d) The City Treasurer is authorized to take any steps necessary to enforce collection of the lien or special assessment, including but not limited to the following:
    - (1) Request the County Recorder to record a notice of any lien or special assessment certified by the City Treasurer. (3828-5/09)
    - (2) Request the County Tax Collector to collect any special assessments certified by the City Treasurer. (3828-5/09)
- The City Treasurer may pursue these remedies whether or not the City is pursuing any other action to terminate an ongoing code violation that was the basis for the fine.
- (e) All citations shall contain a notice that unpaid fines, interest and penalties are subject to the assessment and lien collection procedures of this section. This notice shall satisfy the notice requirements of Government Code sections 38773.1 and 38773.5 when a citation is personally served on the citee. (3397-7/98, 3630-02/04, 3828-5/09)
  - (f) The mother, father and the legal guardian if there is no living parent, of a citee who is a minor shall be liable for any fines, penalties or interest or any other fees imposed upon the minor pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. Any such amounts may be collected from the minor or a parent or guardian. (3751-11/06, 3828-5/09)